

## Bike shops offer more than bikes

I love going to bike shops and seeing all the cool new gear and bikes that are for sale. I'm a cyclist, so that makes sense. However, there are lots of items

in a bike shop that are excellent for other outdoor recreationists like runners, hikers, skaters, boarders, cross country and downhill skiers, and snowshoers.

If you are looking for useful gifts for your favorite athlete, consider heading to a bike shop. I visited with Chris, Jim and Hollis at Cascade Bicycles in Montrose to find out what they sell in their shop that would be suitable for other sports.

• **Softshell and windshell jackets** – Softshell jackets are for colder conditions and have numerous pockets on the exterior and interior for hands, phone, keys and snacks. Windshell jackets are lighter weight and can be rolled up into very small packets. Some have zip-off sleeves so the jacket converts to a vest.

• **Arm warmers and leg warmers** – These arm and leg "sleeves" come in different thicknesses depending on desired thermal or sun protection and they fit close to the skin to provide insulation. The leg warmers often have zippers to allow for pulling them over shoes and the arm warmers typically have a wider cuff for snug fitting around the wrist.

• **Gloves** – Cycling gloves are high



Jim Clark of Cascade Bicycles, shows two dozen gloves they sell ranging from lightweight summer gloves to mid-weight and full winter gloves that are insulated, waterproof and windproof. (Courtesy photo)

tech hand protection that ranges from light weight summer gloves with palm or finger padding to thicker gloves with insulation, wind blocking materials and water repellency. Since cyclists need to shift and brake, maintaining dexterity along with protection from the elements is important. So any sport that needs similar advantages could use this type of glove.

• **Head and neck protection** – Neck gaiters, headbands, skullcaps and beanies can be used with or without

helmets, depending on the sport.

• **Tights and mountain bike pants** – Most cyclists prefer to use good quality cycling shorts with a built-in chamois (for seat protection) and if it gets cold, we pull on leg warmers, tights or knickers/pants that have no chamois. I use cycling tights when I cross country ski or snow shoe, for example, and there is no chamois in the crotch to get in the way.

• **Sunglasses** – Cyclists like sunglasses that wrap around the eye region to protect the eye from swirling

and cold wind as well as glare. These are also great for sports with snow or water that are highly reflective surfaces.

• **Hydration packs** – Hydration packs come in many sizes, shapes and amount of storage compartments. Spare clothing, food and equipment can be carried in these packs in addition to water. A hydration pack is essential for anyone spending time in the backcountry.

• **Socks** – There are lots of fun socks to be had at bike shops. These make great stocking stuffers and cycling socks work great for runners, too. According to Hollis Brake of Cascade Bicycles, socks are their #1 selling item amongst non-cyclists.

• **Nutritionals** – Bars, gels, chews, electrolyte/carbohydrate tablets and powders, recovery drinks, and other sports nutrition products make great gifts. There are many flavors and varieties that can be found at bike shops.

• **Electronics** – Lastly, there are various kinds of GPS systems and heart rate monitors that cyclists use that can also be transported on wrists or in packs for other sports.

If this list doesn't help you make up your mind, get your athlete a gift card, which is available at most bike shops. I hope this offers helpful ideas for practical gifts that will be appreciated by your loved one. This will also support your local bike shop. Ride local. Play local. Buy local.

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## Vehicle safety and getting ready to hit the road

The Holiday season is rapidly approaching. Millions of motorists will take to the roads to visit friends and family in all parts of Colorado.

It seems that Mother Nature knows this and always tries to provide a holiday blizzard to keep everyone busy.

In December of 2006, a massive snowstorm hit Colorado. The storm dropped three feet of snow in the mountains.

Thousands of motorists were caught off guard and were stranded in their vehicles.

Six people died, and many others suffered from hypothermia and frostbite.

As our winter is just now kicking off, it is a good time to make sure your four-wheeled sleigh is ready for the task.

The obvious things should be checked out first, like having good tires aired up to the proper inflation. A set of skid chains, adequate snow tires and a shovel would be good to have with you.

Plenty of washer fluid and good winter wiper blades are a must. Always try to keep the gas tank near the full mark in case you get stuck and need to run the vehicle for warmth.

Batteries love to die in cold weather. Have your mechanic perform a load test to make sure your battery will get you through the winter.

Aside from getting your vehicle ready for the season, give some thought for what may be needed to keep you safe. These storms can hit quickly with wind driven snow, causing white-out conditions.

This can force you to stop on the side of the road and your car can become hopelessly buried by drifting snow. Having some survival items with you is imperative, especially when traveling on our back roads and passes.

Carry some extra heavy clothing and footwear for everyone with you. A vehicle is not insulated very well and the temperature will drop very quickly



Being in the backcountry during the winter months can be a lot of fun. Just make sure your vehicle is up to the task in case the weather leaves you stranded. (Photo courtesy of "Clipper" Klingsmith)

inside if you are stranded.

It is best not to stray away from your car. Your chances of walking out in a blizzard, and living to tell about it are very slim. Best to bundle up and stay put until help arrives. A couple extra wool blankets are a good idea as well.

If you run the engine for warmth, try to keep it to 5 to 10 minutes per hour. Be certain that the exhaust area is clear so the deadly fumes do not come into the car.

You can carry a survival candle with you. These can last for many hours and you would be surprised how much heat one can give off in an enclosed compartment.

As we write here often, a survival kit is essential. Something with a small first aid kit and any needed prescription medication you may require. A flashlight with extra batteries could come in handy as well.

I would put the lithium batteries in it, as they are more tolerant against

leaking in the cold. Regular alkaline batteries do not hold their power much below the freezing mark.

I keep a small stockpile of non-perishable food with me as well as a few bottles of drinking water. A body burns quite a few calories when fighting off the cold and replacing them will help with that.

You may be stranded for quite a few hours and having plenty of food makes the wait much more tolerable, especially if you have children with you.

All of these items can pack neatly in a plastic tub or two. I realize that they can take up space, which is limited at best in a vehicle. Packing wisely and carefully in these containers can help reduce the space needed.

Once you have your kit assembled, leave it in your vehicle until winter is over. You never know when a storm will hit or where you will be when it does. The kit does little good sitting at home. If you have multiple vehicles,

make a kit for each.

If you do find yourself stranded, piling some snow on the car can provide a good deal of insulation. Just be sure to keep the hood clear of snow. The color contrast of your hood will help rescuers see your vehicle from the air.

This would not work for me as I have a white truck. Instead, I tie a blaze orange cloth to the antenna. This provides the contrast that even ground searchers can see.

Blizzards here in the mountains are just one of those things we put up with living here in Colorado. Get things ready ahead of time and you will always be prepared. Cheer up, it will be hot outside again before you know it. Until next time, see you on the trail.

*Mark Rackay is a freelance writer who serves as a Director for the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. For information about the Posse call 970-252-4033 (leave a message) or email info@mcspi.org.*

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